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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

SP - 135/76  
11 August 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy to the DCI, for National Intelligence  
FROM: National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs  
SUBJECT: Cordesman Comments on NIE 11-3/8-75  
REFERENCE: Memorandum [redacted] dated 14 July 1976

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1. The referenced letter from Tony Cordesman, Special Assistant to Deputy Secretary Ellsworth is forwarded for your information.

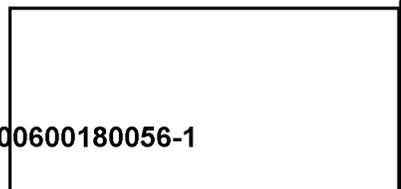
2. I have been informed that DIA is responding to the Cordesman memorandum in some detail, but we have not received a copy of the DIA correspondence. In the course of preparing the DIA reply, [redacted] asked verbally for any NIO/SP comments. He was advised that we thought it was useful for Cordesman to summarize his comments on NIE 11-3/8-75 and those of other DoD officials, and that we would give consideration to them and to the recommendations made. We did not believe, however, that Cordesman's memorandum to Ellsworth and others in the Pentagon was the type of communication to which a detailed response from us would be appropriate.

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3. Cordesman's proposals about "net threat assessment," and those of the PFIAB as reflected in the ongoing NIE 11-3/8 experiment, would have us going in exactly opposite directions. While Cordesman's position is not necessarily shared by other DoD officials, the contrast between his proposals and those of the PFIAB demonstrates the current disarray in our defense planning and decisionmaking process. In the heyday of Secretary McNamara and OSD Systems Analysis and Secretary Kissinger and the NSC Staff, the locus of decisionmaking was clear and, in turn, so was our guidance about national intelligence production needs. Cordesman seeks a more orderly decisionmaking process by tasking the intelligence apparatus with which he is associated to do what the defense planning process is not doing. In this regard, note Cordesman's position on net threat assessments (paragraph E, page 2 of the memorandum and paragraph 6, page 7 of the attachment).

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4. Cordesman's recommendations about "turn point" analysis (paragraph D of the memorandum and paragraph 5, page 7 of the attachment) is impractical for application to the very numerous specific estimates and judgments contained in our major NIE's. We do tell the reader, often in specific terms, the basis for near-term and longer-term estimates, e.g., the degree to which they are based on evidence, extrapolation of trends, or assumptions. And we often judge, in words or numbers, the likelihood or margin of uncertainty in an estimate.

5. We agree, however, with many of Cordesman's observations and suggestions. They indicate a careful and thoughtful review of NIE 11-3/8 and a good perception about problems of its preparation. I will forward you a copy of DIA comments on the Cordesman memorandum when received.



Howard Stoertz, Jr.

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